

She finds healing in Holocaust

Photographer's own loss spurs photo book of Jewish survivors

BY CANDICE WILLIAMS
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Sylvan Lake — As a portrait photographer, Monni Must knows the memories a photograph can hold, especially an image of a departed loved one.

She experienced this firsthand when her 28-year-old daughter, Miya, died in 2007. "I realized how important having pictures of her was," she said. "Unfortunately, the only thing I have left of Miya are her pictures."

While coping with her grief, Must has recorded images of others whose lives have been marked by tragedy. The owner of a Sylvan Lake photo studio, she's working on her second book of photographs of Holocaust survivors.

"It's put meaning back in my life," she said. "I've had an opportunity to meet people I never would have met."

After her daughter's death, Must was asked to photograph survivors of the Nazi extermination campaign, which killed 6 million of Europe's Jews during World War II. The project, sponsored by the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit, produced "Living Witnesses: Faces of the Holocaust," featuring 92 local Holocaust survivors.

A second book will include



Robin Buckson / The Detroit News

Monni Must of Sylvan Lake with one of her many portraits of Holocaust survivors, a mission that she says has revived meaning in her life following the death of her daughter in 2007.

Holocaust survivors from other countries, including Israel and Germany.

Must, 56, and her assistant Linda Schlesinger travel to meet with the survivors in their homes. Local students will write the stories for the second book.

Schlesinger said she watched Must evolve from being very private about her loss to sharing her story with survivors.

"It opened up floodgates of healing," Schlesinger said.

Must, who would only say her daughter died "tragically and suddenly," said her loss helps her relate to Holocaust survivors who lost family members in Nazi death camps.

"One minute you were with them, the next they were gone," she said. "It's a shock to your emotional stability. It was something

I felt they would understand."

Windsor resident Lola Jerome, 80, one of those photographed for the project, shared with Must how she lost her entire family while she was a teenager.

"She does a very a good job," she said. "I told her your book might have 2,000 pages. Everybody has different stories."

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